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ELEMENTARY DRAWING.

It is a very common thing that we hear friends express deep regret that they had not learned to draw when younger, "as it would have given them sources of happiness now cut off entirely." And there is, indeed, no manner of doubt that the enjoyment of those who love Nature, would be greatly enhanced by the ability to draw, even if it were only to make the merest memoranda of the things seen and enjoyed. It is never too late to learn, nor do we believe that, unless in exceptional cases, there is lacking the ability where there is the earnest desire. The motto of Chapman's Drawing Book, "he who can learn to write can learn to draw," is perfectly true, and a full belief that it is so, would make it easy for many of those who desire it, to become draughtsmen. There will always be wide differences in the facility of acquiring the skill requisite to make a good drawing, owing to radical differences in mental constitution, but we are entirely persuaded that the common opinion that, in order to learn to draw well, it is necessary to begin early, is an entire mistake.

Childhood has, it is true, a patience in laboring which manhood loses, and which is an excellent aid in overcoming slight difficulties; but the notion that there is a flexibility in the fingers of a child, which makes it a better draughtsman, is merely a whim. If that patience exist in the man, with determination, the progress made will be in direct proportion to the general intelligence. J. D. Harding, the eminent English teacher, in speaking of this point once said to us; "I have always found that amongst all my pupils, those who learn most easily and make the most thorough draughtsmen, are men of education and general intelligence—the graduates of Oxford and Cambridge." We believe this will be found always true. Men who have been accustomed to work in their own callings with facility and ease, the result of long training, will generally chafe under the little vexations of acquiring the merely mechanical experience—but, overcoming this, will work to excellent advantage.

There is, however, one false idea in the way, which, being removed, would revolutionize the whole system of drawing. We

generally look at drawing as an accomplishment, something complete in itself, rather than what it truly is, a means for becoming better acquainted with Nature. Our teachers of drawing set their pupils to copying prints, &c., and when facility in doing this is acquired, they think they have done all, while the truth is, that a child who sets down with a slate and pencil, and tries to draw its father's house or its pet dog, is learning faster than the most dextrous copyist that which is the true object of learning to draw, viz., the expression of an idea. Understand this, for when we said that the recognition of this truth would revolutionize drawing (and we might have said Art), we did not speak unadvisedly. The child makes its quaint drawing, not with any idea of astonishing anybody by its cleverness, but from the pure delight of giving form to an idea, as much for its own sake as for others. It is the expression of something in its mind which is the spring of its labors, and the more dearly loved is the thing expressed, the more intense is its delight in the drawing.

Suppose the man to be governed by the same feeling as the child. Starting with an idea which he wishes to communicate, he does not stop to think of the excellence of his draughtsmanship, but of the fullness of his thought, and how he may most entirely convey or embody it; and precisely in proportion to the nobility of this thought and its completeness in his mind, will be the value of the drawing. Thus, if he wishes to convey to a friend an idea of a flower he has found, he will make a drawing which tells all he knows of it. If he is a botanist, he will give the botanical characteristics, without any reference to its abstract beauty, perhaps, and the excellence of the drawing will be proportioned to his knowledge of the thing itself. Now, a draughtsman might give you a drawing much more dextrous in its execution, much more wonderful as a specimen of pencilling, but which should not tell a single truth with regard to the flower, and this would be worth *nothing*. But, this latter is drawing as it is taught—the former is as it *ought to be* taught. There is all the difference that there is between elegantly written nonsense and grand ideas

awkwardly told—the one tickles the fancy for a moment and is forgotten, the other digs perhaps the deeper into the soul by its roughnesses.

But there is another idea which is lost sight of in the study of drawing, and which is yet of great importance. There is no way of learning the external characteristics of things so effectual as drawing them—no matter how rudely. We recollect once giving a friend a first lesson in drawing—the object to be drawn was a simple vase, and when the shadows were worked in, he exclaimed, "Why, I never saw that so before, I never noticed those shadows." He was no dull mind either, but a keen lover of Nature, yet he had never before comprehended the mystery of light and shade, and by this simple lesson he had opened to him an universal source of enjoyment. The artist's greatest function is not so much his painting, as learning the truth of Nature more thoroughly by his painting. In learning to draw, he learns also to see; and, it may safely be said that no one *sees* Nature but an artist—not that his eyes are made different, but we only really see that which rests on the mind. Set a child to drawing a head, he will invariably draw it all face, ignoring the cerebral region. It is not because his retina is differently organized from that of an artist, but because he has been accustomed to look at the face only—and the eye and mouth, as the centres of expression, stand most prominent in his perceptions and in his drawing.

We have found it always true, that if we went out sketching with an intelligent friend, non-artistic, he found something in Nature which we never saw before. The habit of fixing the mind intently on Nature to draw her minuter traits, enables us to see many things which are lost entirely in a first impression; and it would be well worth the while to every lover of Nature, to set determinedly at drawing portions of landscape, without regard to the excellence of the work, and without thinking if any one else should ever see it. It would repay the most laborious exertion.

If what we have said is true, it follows that the only true method of studying is to go directly to Nature. The time spent in copying and learning the use of the tools

is nearly wasted, since the primary object of drawing is to obtain or convey ideas; and the true worth of our work is not in the pencilling, but in the subject. Drawing, for the sake of drawing, is like writing in copy-books all one's life.

Sketches

OF THE GREAT MASTERS.

ALBERT DUREE.

THE painter who has wintered in Italy, and on his return to the north lingers on the slopes of the Tyrolese Alps, will often, before plunging into their wild valleys, cast a last fond glance back to the sunny and luxuriant country he is about to lose sight of. Italy, soft, sensuous, glowing, stretches away to the South—a valley of fertility, where the Po winds through delectable meadows, vineyards and olive plantations, the hazy Apennines gently closing up the distance; but imagination extends the view to Florence and Val'd'Arno—to Imperial Rome and the yellow Tiber, and all that perfect Art, balmy climate, venerable relics and hallowed memories can do, combine to render the image full and satisfactory to the mind's eye. From this he turns reluctantly northward, and at once the scene changes, and as he proceeds, becomes more and more stern and cold. Barren cliffs overhang the road, grey castles crown the hill-tops, and overlook ravines through which torrents hurry, splashing among rocks: as he pushes on, an occasional snowy peak juts up from gathering clouds, and as night comes on, cold, blackish vapors drag along the hill-sides, and the wind moans and whirls the snow-drifts among the hollows of the mountains. Akin to this is the difference between Italian and German Art. Italian Art is full, mellow and pleasurable; German, hard, severe, and gloomy. In expression and character the latter surpasses. The Italians were content to charm the senses, to feast the imagination, to touch the heart, and lead the feelings captive. The Germans would instruct us, they almost pain us with the vividness of their truths, and will have our entire attention, though they excite it by piercing us to the quick. They terrify us with strange visions, and crowd upon us with an exhaustless variety of objects, minute, expressive, and individual, to the last degree. Albert Durer is the very type of the race—the essential oil of northern Art. His subjects are as varied as life itself, and his invention fertile beyond measure. His imagination is strong, inclining to images of terror and grotesqueness; his forms are truthful but homely; his outline sharp; his execution firm and nervous, and his coloring brilliant. He delights in elaborate exactness, often portrays every hair and wrinkle, every minute fold in drapery, and each odd shape in the cut of queer outlandish dresses, coupling this painstaking minuteness in the finish of accessories, with an exuberant fancy and a fervid conception of his main subject. In his sublime design of the preparation for the Crucifixion, the various forms of malignity, suffering, and sorrow with which he impresses you, have not prevented his pursuing to the extremest

point of elaboration the meanest little folds of an ugly head-dress, or his touching with sharp precision each tiny rivet in a piece of armor. Truthfulness, earnestness and power are Durer's. His was a grand, energizing, honest soul, and as the very prince of all such, we must love and venerate him. For clearness of conception, and ideas fresh and vigorous from Nature—for uncorruptible love of truth, for faithfulness and patience in perfecting every work to the utmost of his power, he stands unrivaled, and an example to all times. His father was a goldsmith, and bred his son to the same pursuit. This was a good training, and inured him to the careful elaboration so necessary in metal work. Sculptors in marble soon learn to avoid small projections and light open-work, which is so easily knocked off, and aim to produce a finished effect, combined with a broad and quiet surface. Metal is capable of much more lightness of detail. In the treatment of hair, for instance, the marble emulates its waving lines and soft masses, but seldom ventures on its loose ringlets or straggling flying ends; but the bronze bust may almost reproduce the hair with its infinitude of delicate tendrils. This difference is analogous to a general distinction between Italian and German Art, and the metallic method especially marks the style of Durer. He combined the minutest detail and excess of individual parts with the grandest simplicity in general plan, and in the wildest flights of his imagination embodies a multitude of sharply-defined accessories.

The goldsmith's shop did not satisfy Durer; he desired to be a painter, and his father placed him as a pupil with Wohlgemuth, under whom he studied for three years, and then travelled as an apprentice for four years, earning his bread, doubtless, by working as a painter, engraver, and goldsmith. These years of travel and work must have begotten a manly self-reliance, and enriched his mind with a vast variety of scenes and characters.

On returning to Nuremberg, in 1494, he married the handsome daughter of a noted mechanician, Agnes Frey, an event which turned out a "pretty kettle of fish" for the painter, since Agnes, though fair and sweet without, was all vinegar and wormwood within. The mild and serious Albert, his brain teeming with ideas, steadily bent on excellence, and absorbed in the labors of the studio, was watched with jealous eyes by his acid spouse. She embittered his life by harsh insinuations and complaints, and it is believed hastened his death by her endless fretting and scolding.

As the ear of one who longs for sleep is pierced by the creaking of a file, so did the sharp voice of this termagant for ever disturb the sacred privacy of Albert's studio. Poor Durer, he must have had a keen sense of St. James' words: "The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Perhaps the storm which was always brewing for him when he most needed cheerful repose, kept him more constant to his easel, for the number of his works is very great. He shone in all branches, painting, designing, and engraving, which latter Art he greatly improved. His fame as an engraver extended to Italy, impressions of his plates were eagerly sought for there, and the noted Marc Antonio based the excellence of his style of

engraving on the specimens of Durer's talent which reached him in Italy. So much were they esteemed, that counterfeits were made and sold widely, greatly to Durer's mortification. Raphael admired them, and exchanged portraits with the master German. Though of very original mind, picking his materials fresh from Nature, and assiduously watchful of her inexhaustible variety, he was alive to the charms of other styles and schools, and their effect is traceable in his designs. This appears to have been the case with most of the greatest artists. That very delicacy of mental structure which renders them sensitive to the beauties of Nature, necessitates sympathy with the characteristics of other minds. The highest genius is generous, catholic and confiding, sees and relishes beauties of every sort, and is easily swayed by them. A cold, severe, carping, jealous spirit is the property of *cleverness*, of a talent often so brilliant as to pass for genius; but such a temper seldom possesses the *conceptive faculty*, a power always allied to a genial and sympathetic soul. When Durer was in Flanders (where he passed several years), his pictures abounded in homely incidents vividly drawn from Nature: he even went so far in a composition of the death of the Virgin, as to represent one of the apostles strengthening himself in his troubles by a draught from a flask of beer or wine.

When he leaned to the Italian manner he was not always successful, as for instance, in the suicide of Lucretia, at Munich, a nude figure, but the head vulgar and disagreeable. In the *Ecce Homo*, he has shown the deepest feeling, the treatment is more large and noble than usual with him, and there is less of that wiry elaboration in the locks of hair and folds of drapery to which he is so addicted. His Madonnas are generally portraits of some quiet, domestic, virtuous Dutch lady, sometimes bordering on the plainest familiarity, and then again almost reaching the point of divine purity and elevation. His model, for the time, probably influenced him entirely. In his old heads he is full of vigor and life; they are ugly but expressive. His bad men are scarred with the marks of evil lives, and drawn with all the sharpness of individual portraiture. His close view of nature, wiry outline, square and knotted folds of drapery, and excessive minutiæ, have affected German Art to this day, and, what is happier, so have his love of truth, earnest purpose, rich imagination and vigorous expression of life. The various portraits of him by his own hand, represent a thoughtful, modest, and noble countenance. There seems to be a certain repose and discretion, an amiability and gentleness, through which the latent sparks of an inextinguishable fire and energy discover themselves, as in an old lion at rest. His manners were courteous, his bearing was mild and dignified, and his regard for others had a leaning to kindness. His voice was musical, and his conversation full of a rich persuasiveness, to which all listened with delight. His appreciation of talent was just and liberal. Young artists came to him freely for counsel, and went away strengthened by his sincerity, and charmed and enriched by the discourse of this wise and benevolent patriarch of Art.

D. HUNTINGTON.